



# **RIVERSIDE COUNTY BROADBAND MASTER PLAN**

AUGUST 2023

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Riverside County would like to acknowledge Tom Mullen of the Riverside County Information Technology (RCIT) Department and Tina Grande of the county’s Executive Office for serving as the leadership of the Broadband Team. Their coordination of the county’s broadband strategic planning efforts has led to the development of this report and has enabled the county to pursue and execute on the broadband goals and strategies therein.

The county would also like to thank its stakeholders, community organizations, and partners, including the California Emerging Technology Fund and Saeshe, for contributing to the development of this report.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the existing shift of many facets of everyday life to the digital world. The result of these changes is that participation in the digital world has now become more of a necessity than a choice. Riverside County is not immune to these shifts; while many residents and businesses have been able to accommodate these changes, others have been left behind, unable to access the online world and take advantage of its benefits, including the roughly 67,000 households in the county without a home internet subscription.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this Master Plan is to document how Riverside County intends to connect all of its 2.47 million residents to high-speed, reliable, and affordable broadband service. In doing so, the county aims to close its digital divide, a phenomenon that has resulted in widening gaps between those who have reliable access to the internet and those who do not.

The county's Broadband Team initially embarked on this journey by conducting a Gaps and Opportunities Report, which documented the state of broadband in Riverside County. Through this analysis, the Team identified specific areas in Riverside County with the most pressing broadband challenges, including those with low subscription rates and those that lack reliable access to 100/20 megabits per second (Mbps) speed service. The gaps and opportunities described in the report have helped the county identify not only the areas that currently lack broadband access, but also the current initiatives that can be leveraged to promote universal broadband access and use. Major takeaways from the Gaps and Opportunities Report include:

1

67,244 households in Riverside County do not have a home internet subscription.

2

360,000 households in the county may face affordability challenges in paying for an internet subscription or digital devices.

3

Riverside County can focus on socioeconomic groups with lower adoption rates when designing digital equity programs, such as digital literacy training, hotspot loans, and device giveaway programs.

4

The county can leverage and scale its existing Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) Outreach Campaign as well the Digital Equity Program, to meet the digital inclusion needs of residents.

5

Riverside County can partner with community anchor institutions to expand digital literacy efforts.

6

Expanding broadband infrastructure deployment will require significant financial investment and the participation of private internet service providers.

<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, [ACS Table S2801: Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions, 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021](#)





As part of these efforts to understand its digital divide, the county also engaged 26 different public and private stakeholders to capture input from community organizations, industry players, and key broadband providers in the region. The county's Broadband Stakeholder Engagement Report details the findings from this work. Major takeaways from that report include the following:



Riverside County has deployed a multi-media public outreach campaign to increase enrollment in ACP, the federal government's program which provides internet plan and device subsidies to qualifying low-income households. This campaign has made over 32 million impressions county-wide and has contributed to a 35% increase in enrollment between October 2022 and June 2023.<sup>2</sup> Currently, there are 167,019 households enrolled in ACP, with roughly \$5 million in federal subsidies flowing into the county each month.<sup>3</sup>

Riverside County has a disjointed community-based organization (CBO) network, which can lead to challenges in scaling ACP outreach and digital literacy programming in the future.



To complement these reports, Riverside County also compiled a Broadband Funding Opportunities Report. This document focuses on the various federal and state funding programs available to Riverside County and its partners for broadband-related activities. Key highlights include:



Riverside County has committed \$7 million of funds it received from the federal government as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to invest in broadband-related initiatives.<sup>4</sup>



Riverside County was awarded \$500,000 for broadband strategic planning through the California Public Utility Commission's Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant in December 2022.



California has set aside \$2 billion for last-mile broadband infrastructure, \$3.25 billion for a statewide open-access middle mile network, and \$750 million to help local governments obtain better borrowing terms for broadband deployment projects.<sup>5</sup>



The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) created the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, which will fund \$1.86 billion to California for deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure and to improve adoption in un(der)served locations.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Broadband for All, [Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment Tracker](#)

<sup>3</sup> Figure calculated by multiplying the number of households enrolled in ACP by the program's \$30 monthly subsidy.

<sup>4</sup> Riverside County, [American Rescue Plan Act](#)

<sup>5</sup> California Public Utilities Commission, [Broadband Implementation for California](#)

<sup>6</sup> California Public Utilities Commission, [California Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment \(BEAD\) Program](#)

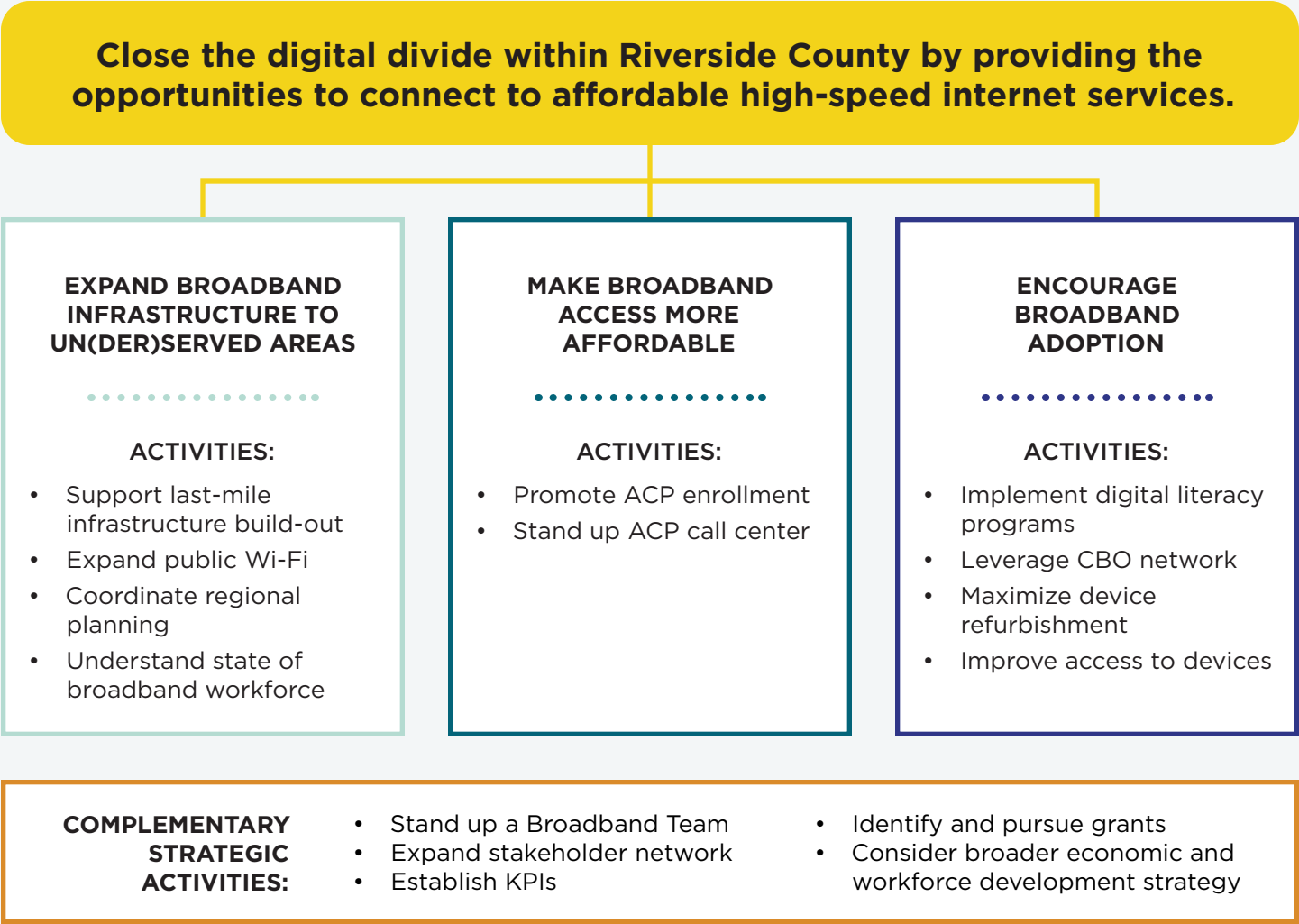
Insights from all three of these reports informed the development of this Master Plan, which outlines the strategies the county will take in the coming years to achieve its vision of “closing the digital divide within Riverside County by providing the opportunities to connect to affordable high-speed internet services.” Closing the digital divide will help create a more equitable and prosperous county, by providing the following opportunities:

- Individuals can utilize telemedicine and take control of their health.
- Individuals can learn new skills and expand their knowledge.
- Students in rural and low-income communities have the same access to information as their more privileged counterparts.
- Individuals can keep in touch with their loved ones, regardless of physical distance.
- Businesses can diversify their hiring practices, bringing in new voices and underrepresented opinions.

To achieve this vision, the Plan has three overarching goals, as well as several complementary strategic activities, which are outlined in **Figure 1** below:

Figure 1: **Master Plan Goals and Activities**

The county will execute upon these goals in the coming years with participation from key partners including private broadband service providers, other county agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), and regional stakeholders.

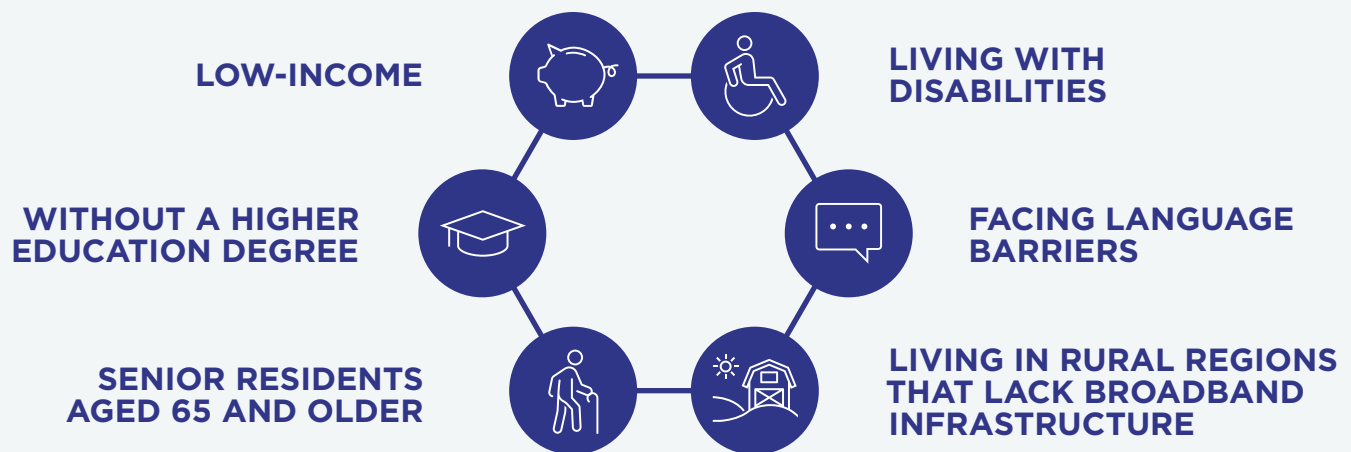


## THE NEED FOR BROADBAND.....

The internet has expanded life as we know it, bringing users global information, opportunities for connection, and the ability to carry out everyday tasks more efficiently. This has led to expanded economic and social opportunities for many. Unfortunately, this has left those without an internet connection at a disadvantage, as they cannot fully participate in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century way of life.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that the digital world is here to stay, meaning that those who lack access to high-speed internet will increasingly be left behind. High-speed internet enables many services that have migrated online, including remote learning, remote work, telehealth, and more. While the internet makes many opportunities more accessible, it can also fuel existing inequities, as members of groups who already face systemic barriers and socioeconomic inequities are disproportionately without internet access. The areas with the lowest adoption rates in Riverside County tend to disproportionately impact socioeconomically disadvantaged residents such as those who are:

**While the internet makes many opportunities more accessible, it can also fuel existing inequities.**



Expanding broadband access will not only benefit unserved and underserved communities but will help the county as a whole to achieve many of its economic development strategies—from increasing access to high paying jobs, to providing a world-class education, and enhancing safe and healthy communities.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, as Riverside County continues to grow, broadband will be a key tool in tackling many challenges by addressing critical infrastructure needs, dealing with a lack of diversification in job growth, increasing levels of education, and improving economic outlooks for communities with pockets of extreme poverty.

While the county's investment in broadband will require significant resources, universal broadband access will create many positive benefits for Riverside, including a more educated workforce, improved health outcomes, an increased number of jobs in the broadband industry, an ability to participate in the digital economy, social connectivity, and more equitable outcomes across the board. Furthermore, it will prepare Riverside County's residents and economy for the future to ensure that it will not be left behind in an increasingly digital world.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN .....

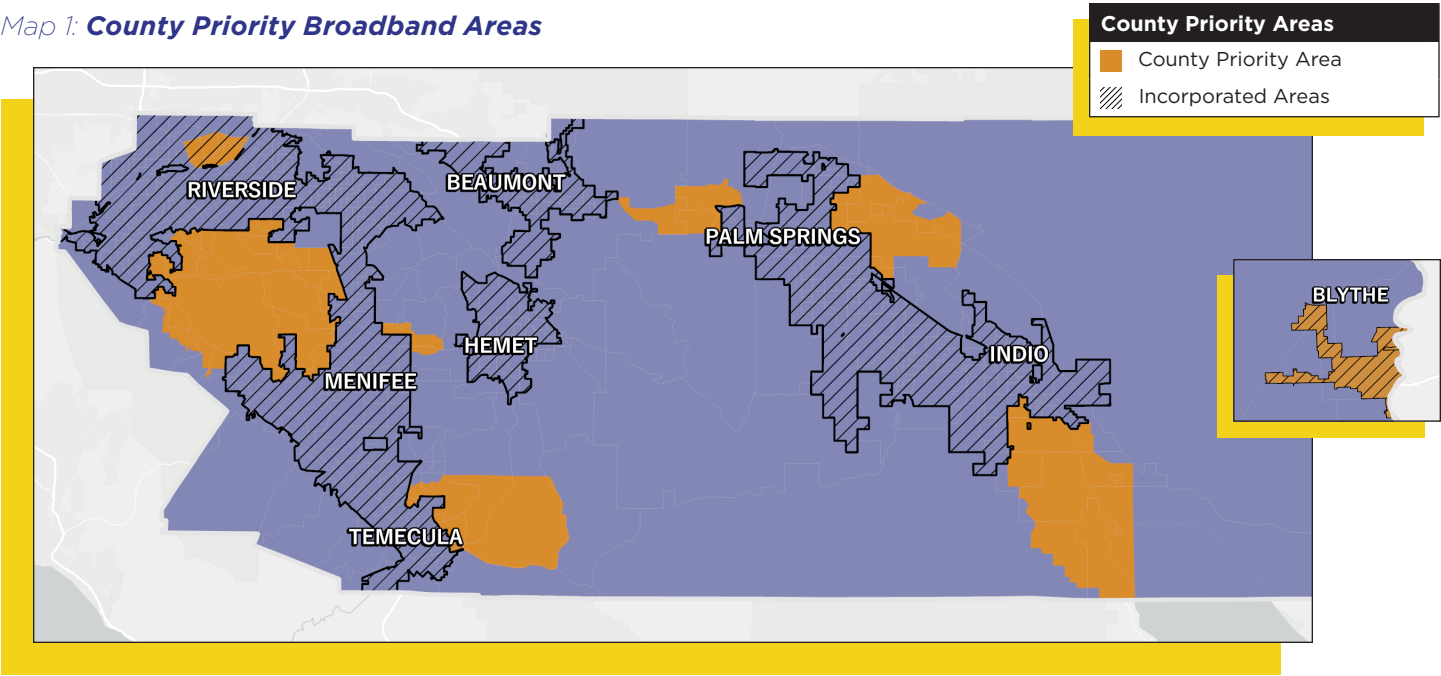
Riverside County is working to ensure that every household, business, and community institution can access reliable, high-speed broadband services at affordable rates. The county will be implementing a multi-pronged approach to achieve this goal.

This plan outlines the strategies that Riverside County and its partners will implement to address gaps in broadband service. The plan consists of three overarching goals—expanding broadband infrastructure to un(der)served areas across Riverside County, making broadband access more affordable, and encouraging broadband adoption—as well as several supporting strategies establishing centralized program oversight for broadband initiatives and considering the county’s broader economic workforce development goals as part of this initiative. The strategies outlined under each goal illustrate tangible steps the county can take to expand broadband service.

While the entire county will benefit from these efforts, the county has identified high-need areas based on analysis of data from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the American Community Survey (ACS). These priority areas are depicted below in **Map 1**. While most of these areas are located in unincorporated communities, they also encompass incorporated areas that demonstrate a strong infrastructure need, affordability need, or both.

Many unincorporated areas with broadband needs have mountainous terrain and/or low population density which makes them economically challenging to serve by for-profit internet service providers. Consequently, many of the households that lack access to a fiber connection, which provides the most reliable service out of all options, are located in unincorporated areas. Many parts of more densely populated areas also see distinct broadband needs, due to infrastructure, affordability, and digital literacy challenges.

Map 1: County Priority Broadband Areas



The deployment of broadband infrastructure is both labor and capital-intensive. However, with financial support from the federal government, the State of California, and regional partners, now is the time to invest in this critical work. The county recognizes the need for collaboration to achieve its goals and believes that including stakeholders will complement its broadband expansion efforts. Collaboration with other counties, Tribal nations, city governments, housing authorities, schools, citizens, private companies, and more will allow Riverside County to strengthen its capacity to deliver solutions for residents’ multi-faceted broadband needs.



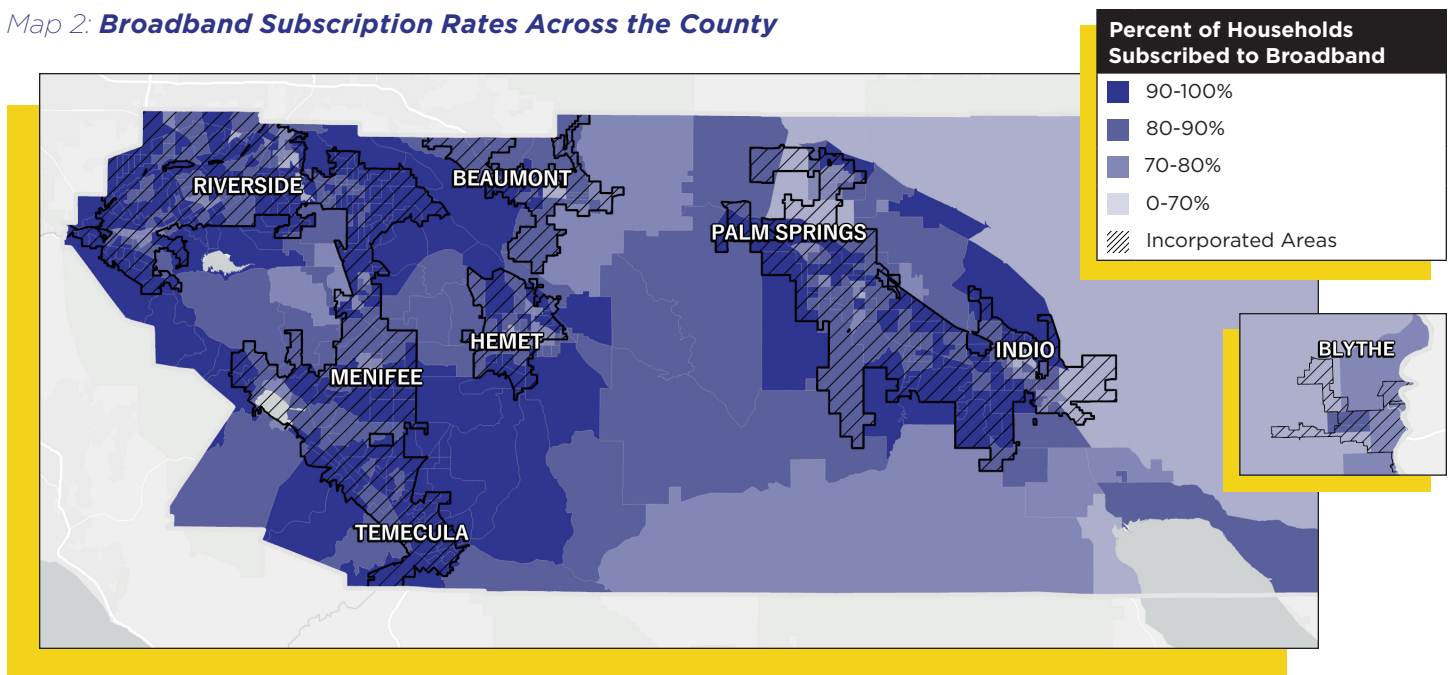
## CURRENT STATE OF BROADBAND IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY . . . . .

Riverside County recognizes the importance of inclusive broadband access to ensure all residents are equipped to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, inequitable broadband access contributes to the county's current digital divide, which disproportionately impacts residents affected by several related socioeconomic barriers.

Roughly 67,000 households in Riverside County lack a home broadband subscription.<sup>8</sup> While this makes up only 9% of households in the county, only 77% of the county's residents have a wired connection using fiber optic, cable, or copper (DSL).<sup>9</sup> The remaining households rely on technologies such as dial-up, cellular plans, and satellite, which do not reliably offer the high speeds necessary to meet modern demands. Residents lack subscriptions for a variety of reasons, including insufficient broadband infrastructure to connect their homes, unaffordable subscription plans, and lack of understanding on how to use the internet and accompanying digital devices. Some areas of the county face greater challenges in connecting residents to the internet, these areas are shown in light blue in **Map 2: Broadband Subscription Rates Across the County**.

**Roughly 67,000 households in Riverside County lack a home broadband subscription.**

Map 2: *Broadband Subscription Rates Across the County*



8 US Census Bureau, [ACS Table S2801: Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions](#).

5-Year Estimates 2017-2021

9 Ibid.

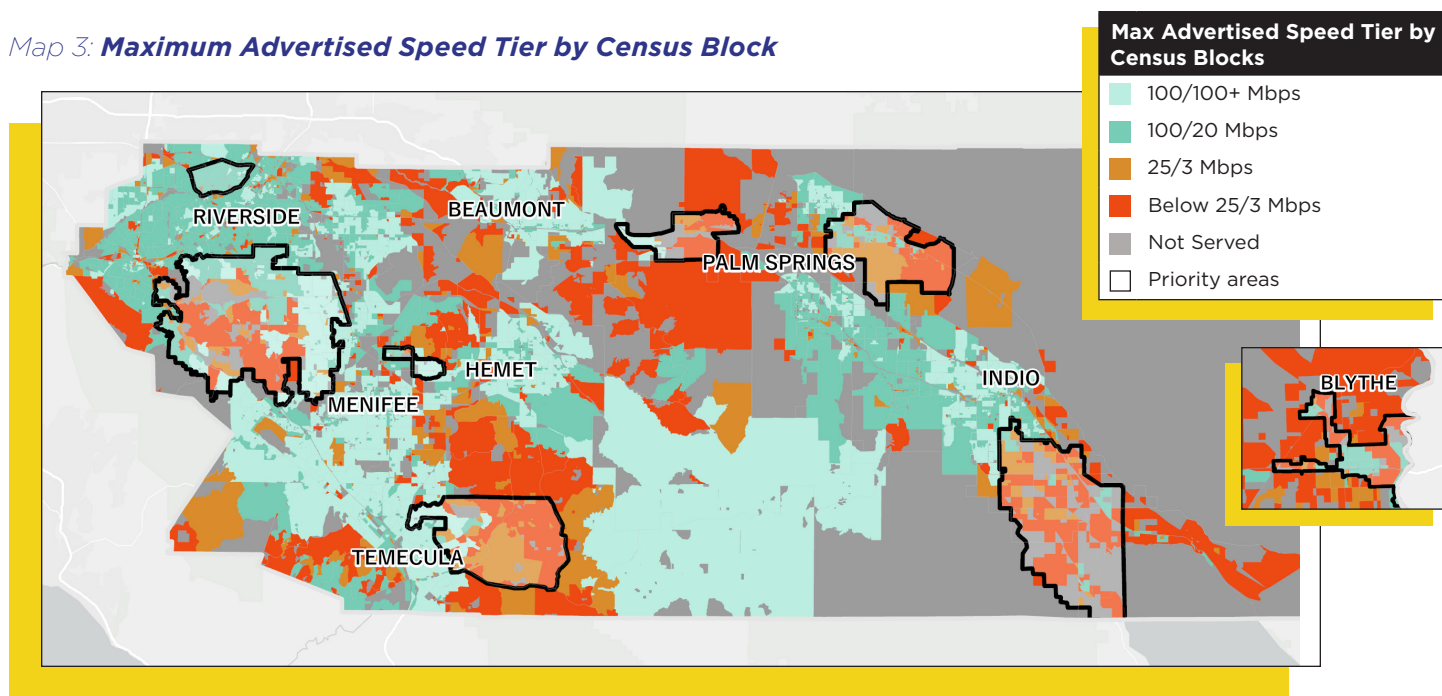
## • Home broadband service is not available for all residents

Approximately 37,000 locations lack access to the 100/20 Mbps connection threshold that the State of California uses to define broadband.

Riverside County contains roughly 29,000 broadband serviceable locations (defined by the FCC as structures that have the capacity for a broadband connection) that do not have broadband service available.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, approximately 37,000 locations lack access to the 100/20 Mbps connection threshold that the State of California uses to define broadband.<sup>11</sup>

Three major national internet service providers (ISPs)—AT&T, Charter/Spectrum, and Frontier—provide the majority of internet service in the county, alongside several other smaller providers. There are several geographic gaps in this market, primarily concentrated in a few portions of the county shown in **Map 3: Maximum Advertised Speed Tier by Census Block** below. While some portions of major cities in the county have gaps in service availability, the areas with the largest broadband availability challenges are located in unincorporated communities which often have hilly terrain. These areas include much of the Wine Country region, unincorporated areas located along the Banning Pass and in the San Jacinto Mountains, communities in the Coachella Valley (particularly unincorporated areas around the Salton Sea), and Blythe and its environs.

Map 3: **Maximum Advertised Speed Tier by Census Block**



<sup>10</sup> Federal Communications Commission, [FCC National Broadband Map](#) (accessed May 24, 2023)  
<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## —• Affordability plays a major role in access to broadband service

Even when residents live in areas with infrastructure for high-speed broadband service, many cannot afford the cost of a home broadband subscription. With broadband subscription plans ranging between \$50-\$90 per month across the county, plans are unaffordable for many.<sup>12</sup> As many as 360,000, or half of the county's households, face affordability challenges.<sup>13</sup> In addition to home broadband subscriptions, households struggle to afford the digital devices necessary to connect to the internet. 34,000 households in the county lack a device completely, and an additional 54,000 households rely solely on a smartphone for their connectivity needs.<sup>14</sup>

The federal government's Affordable Connectivity Program provides key subsidies to address residents' affordability challenges. The program provides discounts of up to \$30 per household (up to \$75 for households living on tribal land) on internet service for households that have total household income below 200% of federal poverty guidelines or are enrolled in certain government assistance programs. While ACP provides an opportunity to address affordability barriers, only about 47% of eligible households in the county were enrolled in the program as of June 2023, leaving roughly 190,000 eligible unenrolled households in Riverside County.<sup>15</sup>



## —• Broadband adoption challenges also contribute to the digital divide

Even with affordable broadband access, residents need to know how to take advantage of connectivity for key tasks such as remote learning, telehealth, job training and applications, and communications to truly bridge the digital divide.

A variety of socioeconomic variables impact broadband adoption. Certain populations, including low-income households, senior residents, residents with limited educational attainment, disabilities, limited English proficiency, members of racial and ethnic minority groups, and residents of rural areas, all disproportionately face adoption challenges. As such, areas of the county with high concentrations of these groups face significant adoption-related needs.

Currently, the county lacks sufficient programming aimed at helping residents improve their understanding of how to use the internet and take advantage of it in their daily lives. While a few digital literacy programs do exist or have existed in the county in the past, they have not had sufficient reach and have not served a significant number of residents. Other programs providing device donations, temporary device and hotspot loans, and public Wi-Fi do exist, but these programs are limited in size, scope, frequency, and ability to serve all residents throughout the county.

12 Analysis of pricing data from various internet service provider offers.

13 Number of households eligible for ACP. [FCC ACP Eligibility Criteria](#)

14 US Census Bureau, [ACS Table S2801: Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions, 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021](#)

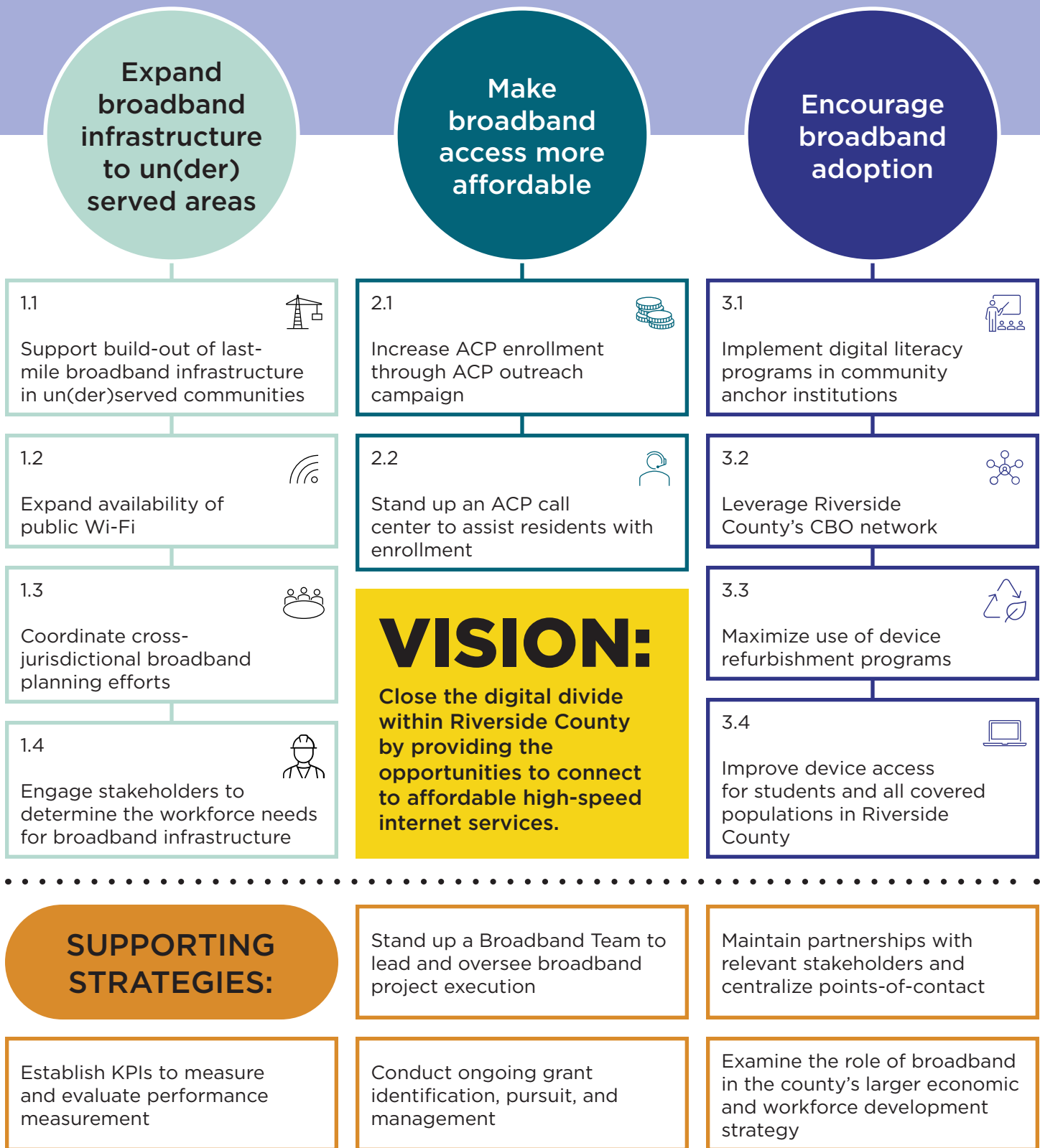
15 California Department of Technology Broadband for All, [Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment tracker](#)





# RIVERSIDE COUNTY BROADBAND STRATEGIES

Figure 2: *Riverside County's Strategic Broadband Plan*







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## Goal 1: Expand broadband infrastructure to un(der)served areas across Riverside County

To ensure connectivity for all, Riverside County plans to take action to increase the availability of broadband for residents who live in unserved areas. To reach this goal, the county will both support the build-out of last-mile infrastructure in unserved areas and also bolster public Wi-Fi offerings in these communities to provide an accessible alternative for residents. In addition, through coordination with regional partners such as the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), Riverside County will take steps to enable cross-jurisdictional projects, including through adoption of the uniform permitting procedures, collaboration on infrastructure projects, and a coordinated approach to ACP outreach efforts. Riverside County hopes that these steps will also make the county a more attractive partner for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the region. In addition, the Broadband Team will engage industry stakeholders, including internet service providers, to assess the current workforce capacity for installing and maintaining broadband infrastructure, and take steps towards addressing any existing gaps.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1.1</b> Support build-out of last-mile broadband infrastructure in un(der)served communities | <b>1.2</b> Expand availability of public Wi-Fi   |
| <b>1.3</b> Coordinate cross-jurisdictional broadband planning efforts                           | <b>1.4</b> Engage stakeholders to determine the workforce needs for broadband infrastructure |

## Strategy 1.1: Support build-out of last-mile broadband infrastructure in un(der)served communities

DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY: HIGH
<p>Several portions of Riverside County have many unserved or underserved locations. Countywide, there are roughly 29,437 locations that do not have 25/3 Mbps service and are therefore unserved, and an additional 7,471 locations that are underserved.<sup>16</sup> In order to expand broadband infrastructure in these areas, Riverside County plans to partner with ISPs to coordinate the deployment of new infrastructure projects that build out fiber-to-the-home. These partnerships will involve significant participation from ISPs both in building, operating, and maintaining these networks, as well as financing matching funds required by some broadband infrastructure grants. In turn, the county will provide regional coordination and support for ISPs looking to invest in broadband infrastructure build-out within Riverside County. The county's support can take a few different forms, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating expansion of efforts with ISPs to ensure deployments serve the highest need areas,</li> <li>• Providing letters of support as ISPs apply for state and federal funding,</li> <li>• Serving as a co-applicant for funding programs, and</li> <li>• Establishing partnerships with ISPs as defined by a mutually agreed upon Memoranda of Understanding (MOU).</li> </ul> <p>To execute on broadband infrastructure expansion, Riverside County intends to take a strong coordination role, pursuing grants in partnership with ISPs and finding opportunities to establish partnerships among ISPs and other county agencies with established broadband needs. Support from the county, along with the ample state and federal funding available for broadband infrastructure projects, should help incentivize ISPs to invest in un(der)served communities and leverage opportunities to expand their existing markets. The county anticipates that deployment projects will take shape in several ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Build-out of fiber-to-the-premise projects to reach areas without access to high-speed broadband service offered at 100/20 Mbps.</b> The county has already analyzed FCC and other available speed data to establish where unserved locations and communities exist within Riverside County. The county will use this information to identify various funding programs in which each location is eligible and gauge ISP interest to determine where projects are most feasible. The county will plan to engage ISPs operating within or around these service communities as an opportunity to better serve county residents, improve the resiliency of their networks, and expand their footprint.</li> <li>• <b>Upgrade existing copper networks, which tend to be slow and unreliable, to high-speed fiber infrastructure.</b> Approximately 10,500 locations in the county have copper but no other wired service offering.<sup>17</sup> These locations are well suited for a possible infrastructure upgrade project given the slow speeds of copper service, which uses older phone lines to deliver internet to the home. Riverside County will identify funding opportunities that are eligible to be used for these projects and review guidance from the FCC and California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) as there are several regulations which restrict these kinds of projects to ensure that access to telephone service remains in place. In addition, the county will work with ISPs to understand project feasibility, as some ISPs are more interested in these kinds of projects than others (e.g., some ISPs are in the midst of nationwide pushes to expand fiber and reduce copper footprints).</li> <li>• <b>Pursue alternative technologies such as fixed wireless where fiber may not be feasible.</b> In a small percentage of very rural areas with mountainous terrain (where costs of deploying fiber can be up to around ten times more per mile),<sup>18</sup> and/or very isolated locations, fiber projects may not be feasible due to high costs of infrastructure build-out. The county will identify locations where fiber is not feasible due to cost, based on available data including topographic information, population density, and existing infrastructure. Based on the locations identified, the county will look to identify alternative technologies that can best serve the needs of these communities. The county will specifically pursue funding opportunities that allow for fixed wireless or other alternative technologies, as some programs have restrictions on technologies and service delivery speed which may be difficult to meet in these cases.</li> </ul>	

<sup>16</sup> Federal Communications Commission, [FCC National Broadband Map](#) (accessed May 24, 2023)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Public Policy Institute of California, [Achieving Universal Broadband in California](#)



## DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

In addition, fiber projects may take advantage of the state's open-access middle mile project which will bring middle mile fiber through major highway corridors around the county. In particular, this will help allow smaller ISPs to expand fiber, as larger ISPs tend to utilize their own middle mile networks. Riverside County will encourage use of this network when it makes economic sense for the business model of a particular project and engage ISPs to make sure that they understand the benefits of this project, especially when they do not already have their own comparable middle mile infrastructure in place. Given the expansion of broadband infrastructure across Riverside County, and southern California as a whole, the county will also look to facilitate regional efforts to streamline permitting efforts to reduce bureaucratic barriers where possible.

## TARGET AREAS OF NEED

Unserved areas are scattered across Riverside County. Projects to replace existing copper infrastructure to fiber in the northwestern corner of the county include:

- Cities of Jurupa Valley, Riverside, and Corona
- Unincorporated areas in the Wine Country region
- Southwestern corner of the county
- Parts of the Coachella Valley
- City of Blythe

In other parts of some of the same unincorporated areas, along with a few others such as along the Banning Pass, it is necessary to expand ISP reach into new service territories to serve residents with fiber, as households in these areas either have no service offerings at all or only wireless options that do not reach broadband speeds.

Finally, the terrain in some very mountainous areas of the county may not be conducive to fiber build-out so these areas may need to be served with alternative technologies, such fixed wireless or high-speed satellite. This includes communities in the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains.

## RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

- Internet Service Providers
- Federal and state agencies who provide and oversee funding programs (e.g., CPUC, United States Department of Agriculture, FCC)
- Partnering county agencies
- Riverside County residents

## ESTIMATED COSTS

Estimates put the average cost of fiber deployment in Riverside County at \$5,008 per passing. According to this figure, it would cost approximately:

- \$257 million to reach all 51,295 unserved and underserved locations with fiber
- \$177 million to reach all locations with fiber except the roughly 3,000 locations in high-cost census blocks

To reach the enough locations to meet the statewide availability goal of 98%, it would cost:

- \$74 million to deploy fiber to unserved locations
- A total of \$185 million to deploy fiber to unserved and underserved locations

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account
- CPUC Local Agency Technical Assistance
- CPUC Last Mile Federal Funding Account
- FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)
- National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Community Connect
- USDA ReConnect
- USDA Rural Technical Assistance Grant





## • Strategy 1.2: Expand availability of public Wi-Fi

DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY: MEDIUM
<p>For those who do not have a reliable home broadband subscription, public Wi-Fi is an important means of accessing the internet. Many community members are reliant on libraries for public Wi-Fi; however, community anchor institutions (CAIs) are not always reliable forums of internet access for everyone, particularly residents who live in more isolated areas, those who live far away from library locations, and those without a car. Expanding public Wi-Fi to parks, community centers, and other community anchor institutions, such as county facilities, will help fill the gap for those without a home broadband connection. While public access points are not a full replacement for home internet access, for those without reliable service, they are helpful places for connectivity.</p> <p>In order to identify areas that can benefit most from expanded public Wi-Fi, Riverside County will first identify and map locations where public Wi-Fi sites can be found and assess the Wi-Fi gap in communities that are deemed unserved or underserved. Following this, the county will determine where additional public Wi-Fi locations are needed. Because those who lack home broadband connections may lack a personal vehicle such as a car, it will consider walking and transit times to reach existing sites from unserved communities. Ideally, public Wi-Fi locations will be installed near publicly available community anchor institutions. Therefore, the county will review existing facilities such as parks, community centers, and county facilities to determine the feasibility of making it a location equipped with providing public Wi-Fi.</p> <p>Once the county has identified sites based on proximity to need and site characteristics, it will understand the cost feasibility of each location. Cost feasibility will be determined by both capital expenses required to acquire items such as Wi-Fi radios, network routers, and electrical upgrades, along with possible new fiber line extensions, along with the operating costs.</p> <p>Expanded fiber lines to serve public Wi-Fi locations could be part of larger infrastructure expansion project, so coordination between these two efforts is an important consideration. Furthermore, the county will build off of the ISP partnerships it will foster as part of Strategy 1.1 to expand infrastructure to unserved locations.</p>	
TARGET AREAS OF NEED	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
<p>While the majority of county residents have access to a Riverside County Library System (RCLS) branch or city library within a 15-minute drive, there are 9,147 unserved locations at least 15-minutes away from a public Wi-Fi site (and 1,345 are at least a 30-minute drive away). These locations are found in a few small, isolated communities in unincorporated areas of the county which are not near any library or other public Wi-Fi site and often lack access to fast, reliable broadband service offerings. These include the census designated places of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aguanga</li> <li>• Sage</li> <li>• Pinyon Pines</li> <li>• Alpine Village</li> </ul> <p>Only a very small proportion of residents live within walking distance of a public Wi-Fi site, primarily concentrated in the blocks immediately surrounding neighborhood libraries. Although it is not feasible to ensure public Wi-Fi is within walking distance for every community across the county, identifying areas of the county with low vehicle ownership and low proximity to public Wi-Fi by walking or public transit will be an important step in identifying intervention areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside County Library System</li> <li>• Riverside County Parks and Recreation</li> <li>• Municipal libraries</li> <li>• Community centers</li> <li>• Other county partner agencies</li> </ul>





ESTIMATED COSTS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<p>There are 29,437 unserved locations in Riverside County. Of those locations, 5,984 are more than a 15-minute drive from a public Wi-Fi site. Expanding public Wi-Fi to reach these locations more easily will require the development of new public Wi-Fi sites, which will incur both capital expenses and operating expenses. Operational costs vary considerably based on factors such as location, equipment, size, and bandwidth required for each site. Public Wi-Fi can cost as little as \$10,000 per site per year to operate or as much as \$70,000. Assuming an average of \$40,000 per location to operate each public, and five new locations to provide these households, which are located in several different areas of the county, with an accessible public Wi-Fi location nearby, there is a need of roughly \$200,000 per year plus additional capital expenses which vary depending on existing infrastructure.<sup>19</sup> Capital costs may be reduced if projects come along with infrastructure expansion to other nearby locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FCC E-Rate</li> <li>• Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grants for Libraries</li> <li>• Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Public Housing Operating Fund</li> <li>• HUD Neighborhood Networks (Multifamily Housing)</li> <li>• USDA Community Connect</li> <li>• USDA Community Facilities (CF) Guaranteed Loan Program</li> </ul>

19 Source: Conversations with ISPs along with outside research.

### Strategy 1.3: Coordinate cross-jurisdictional broadband planning efforts

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>Collaboration with entities located both within and beyond Riverside County will help maximize the impact of efforts to close the digital divide by aligning them with the efforts of other entities. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration efforts include working with SCAG to move towards adopting permitting standards shared across the region. This will include aligning standards both with other SCAG members in the region and municipal governments located within Riverside County and neighboring counties. This will more easily allow for cross-jurisdictional projects and reduce potential administrative burdens that ISPs may face with infrastructure expansion projects. As a member organization of SCAG, Riverside County will work to make sure that policies adopted by the region align with the recommendations included in the state's Permitting Playbook for Local Governments, including information and data sharing, a streamlined approach for permit applications, and encoring specific procedures such as Dig Once.</p> <p>Regional collaboration efforts will extend beyond permitting, as there are other areas for collaboration such as coordinating ACP outreach efforts, particularly as it relates to cross-jurisdictional advertising costs and information sharing about program efficacy. In particular, collaboration with other regional bodies will assist the county's efforts to expand broadband availability as it allows for infrastructure projects to extend across jurisdictions. This can reduce costs and make projects more viable for providers.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
Regional collaboration across jurisdictions will benefit all portions of the county.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Southern California Association of Governments</li> <li>Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG)</li> <li>Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG)</li> <li>All 28 municipalities located within Riverside County</li> <li>State agencies such as the California Department of Technology (CDT) and California Public Utilities Commission</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
Implementing this strategy will not incur significant costs until mutually agreed upon partnerships have been established. Partnership initiatives will vary in scope, size, and cost.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CASF Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Account</li> <li>CPUC Local Agency Technical Assistance</li> </ul>	



• **Strategy 1.4: Engage stakeholders to determine the workforce needs for broadband infrastructure**

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>Construction and maintenance of broadband infrastructure requires a trained workforce. In order to make sure that this workforce of technicians, maintenance workers, and others well equipped for the tasks need exists in the county, the Broadband Team will engage stakeholders to understand the current state of this workforce and determine whether gaps exist in workforce supply for broadband deployment and maintenance. The Team will catalogue existing training programs run by ISPs, technical and community colleges, and other entities in the county, as well as the existing supply of skilled workers in these positions. Using these findings, the Team will partner with ISPs and others in the county to coordinate the development of technical training programs or other strategies to address any identified gaps. By taking steps to fortify the local broadband workforce, ISPs will be assured that they will have the necessary workforce to complete current and future infrastructure build-out projects in the county. This strategy will support the county’s previously established economic development strategy promoting programs that provide residents with pathways to high-wage jobs in the broadband industry.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
<p>Through this economic development strategy, Riverside County aims to serve the entire county with high-speed broadband and will focus on historically socioeconomically disadvantaged communities for broadband skill training, education, and, eventually, employment when applicable.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet Service Providers and industry partners</li> <li>• Riverside County Housing and Workforce Solutions (HWS)</li> <li>• Riverside County educational institutions (i.e., UC Riverside, CSU institutions, local community colleges, vocational schools, etc.)</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
<p>The county will avoid direct costs of running its own training programs, but there will be costs associated with programs run by ISPs, educational institutions, or others, some of which may at least partly be alleviated by participant fees.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Department of Labor Building Pathways to Infrastructure Jobs Grant</li> <li>• Private funding from ISPs</li> </ul>	





## Goal 2: Make broadband access more affordable

To reduce affordability barriers, Riverside County will help its residents by providing solutions to the challenge of expensive plans. While the county cannot influence the costs of internet subscription plans established by private providers, it will work vigorously to promote ACP to increase enrollment of the ACP-eligible population within Riverside County. Enrollment in ACP can reduce the costs of residents' monthly internet subscription plan and provide discounts on devices with qualifying providers. The county will drive its ACP efforts through a targeted outreach campaign for qualifying households and launch a county-specific call center that can provide enrollment assistance.

### 2.1 Increase ACP enrollment through ACP Outreach Campaign

### 2.2 Stand up an ACP call center to assist residents with enrollment





## Strategy 2.1: Increase ACP enrollment through ACP Outreach Campaign

DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY: HIGH
<p>Riverside County will continue to execute a targeted ACP outreach strategy as long as the program continues to be administered by the Federal Communications Commission. As part of this outreach campaign, the county has analyzed ACP enrollment data to identify the total number of ACP-eligible households, current rate of enrollment, and the areas within Riverside County that have a high eligible household count. While the outreach campaign is county-wide, emphasis has been placed on areas with lower rates of enrollment.</p> <p>Targeted outreach efforts include a wide range of advertising mediums, including social media, direct mail, television, and radio advertisements in addition to in-person enrollment events held at various community centers across the county. Riverside County has also established an ACP call center that is advertised on all advertising materials to ensure residents have enrollment support should they need it.</p> <p>Throughout this campaign, Riverside County has and will continue to track its performance against enrollment metrics. Ultimately, the county's goal is to increase the number of households enrolled in ACP. Consequently, the county will closely monitor the performance of its various advertising mediums to ensure it is investing in the most successful avenues of outreach.</p> <p>To complement these efforts, the county's Broadband Team will partner with other departments and agencies that serve ACP-qualifying populations. Through this, the county is better able to reach households that qualify for other social programs such as Free and Reduced Lunch, Pell Grant, Veteran's Pensions, among many others, and are therefore likely eligible for ACP. The county will also continue to train and partner with community-based organizations to staff ongoing in-person enrollment events.</p>	
TARGET AREAS OF NEED	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
<p>Areas with the highest adoption and affordability needs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside</li> <li>• Menifee</li> <li>• Temecula</li> <li>• Beaumont</li> <li>• Hemet</li> <li>• Palm Springs</li> <li>• Indio</li> <li>• Blythe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sigma Beta Xi (SBX)</li> <li>• Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP)</li> <li>• California Farmworker Association</li> <li>• First5 Riverside</li> <li>• AGIF/Nube Educational Foundation</li> <li>• Riverside County Department of Public Social Services</li> <li>• Riverside County Department of Child Support</li> <li>• Riverside County Library System</li> <li>• Riverside County Office of Education</li> <li>• Riverside County Economic Development Agency</li> </ul>
ESTIMATED COSTS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<p>Costs of ACP outreach campaign are estimated to total to \$1.5 million and will include the following advertising and outreach methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital media</li> <li>• Outdoor media</li> <li>• Radio and TV advertisements</li> <li>• Direct engagement contact (in-person events, mail, and direct messaging)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>• ACP Navigator Program</li> <li>• National Competitive Outreach Program</li> </ul>



## Strategy 2.2: Stand up an ACP call center to assist residents with enrollment

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>The county will establish and stand up a call center with the purpose of supplementing the county's ACP Outreach Campaign with the goal of providing enrollment support to residents. The call center will be administered in partnership with the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) and staffed by customer service representatives trained in the ACP enrollment process. The call center will also offer multi-lingual support to ensure language barriers are not an impediment to enrollment.</p> <p>The county's ACP marketing efforts, from social media, radio, TV, and flyers will feature the county's specific ACP call center hotline. The intention will be for marketing efforts to directly lead to increased ACP sign-ups for eligible families. The county will closely track the call center's progress and the source of each call to ensure the county continues to utilize the most successful mediums of advertising.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
The county's ACP call center is available to help residents across all of Riverside County.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Emerging Technology Fund</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
Estimated costs will cover the costs of running the ACP call center. The county anticipates the cost to range from \$55,000 - \$250,000. This estimate includes staffing costs and the costs to compensate CBOs that assist the county in this effort.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>FCC Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program</li> </ul>	





## Goal 3: Encourage broadband adoption

Improving broadband adoption is a critical aspect of closing the digital divide. To do so, Riverside County plans to implement digital literacy programs that teach residents how to maximize the full use of their broadband connection. These programs have the potential to improve many aspects of residents' lives, including improving their access to medical care through telehealth, expanding access to educational and workforce opportunities, assisting with the provision of government services, and allowing for better communication with friends and family. In order to provide these services, Riverside County plans to bolster its regional network of community-based organizations, as they are often at the front lines of digital literacy and adoption efforts.

**3.1** Implement digital literacy programs in community anchor institutions

**3.2** Leverage Riverside County's CBO network

**3.3** Maximize use of device refurbishment programs

**3.4** Improve device access for students and all covered populations in Riverside County



### Strategy 3.1: Implement digital literacy programs in community anchor institutions

DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY: MEDIUM
<p>To ensure strategic investment in broadband adoption measures, the county will first conduct an inventory of existing broadband service and available devices in libraries and other community anchor institutions.<sup>20</sup> The Broadband Team will work with the Riverside County Library System to secure funding for a permanent digital literacy program that builds on the momentum started by digital literacy programs offered by libraries in the past.</p> <p>This digital literacy program will provide multilingual computer classes in-person at participating county libraries and/or other community anchor institutions. The county will also consider partnering with community-based organizations to build capacity by using CBO staff to operate the aforementioned programs. The county can work with the Public Library Association to customize a Riverside-specific literacy training website for its libraries and CAIs.<sup>21</sup> The county will also continue to promote existing free online digital literacy courses offered by various peer agencies for residents that may not be able to attend in-person programs.</p> <p>Digital literacy programming will train residents not only on how to use digital devices, computers, and key applications, but should also teach participants how to make full use of the internet through social connectivity, searching for jobs, submitting job applications, and obtaining government services. The county intends to pursue grants and other sources of funding to support the purchase of digital devices for participants who complete digital literacy programming.</p>	
TARGET AREAS OF NEED	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
<p>Riverside County will target county and state priority areas, and unincorporated communities throughout the county.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAIs, including K-12 schools, libraries, hospitals and medical providers, public safety entities, institutions of higher education, county departments, facilities at national, state, regional, and local parks</li> <li>• CBOs</li> </ul>
ESTIMATED COSTS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<p>Anticipated costs include \$2.75 million in programming, along with additional administrative costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programming costs (approximately \$500 per participant)<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• Device purchases (approximately \$600 per device)</li> <li>• Additional administrative costs (approximately \$45,000 annually for each CAI or partnered CBO)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>• NTIA Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Capacity Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Competitive Grant</li> <li>• Community Connect</li> <li>• Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program</li> <li>• California Teleconnect Fund</li> <li>• National Leadership Grants for Libraries</li> <li>• California State Library High-Speed Broadband Grant</li> </ul>

20 Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition, [Connecting Anchor Institutions: A Broadband Action Plan](#)

21 Public Library Association, [Digital Literacy](#)

22 California Public Utilities Commission, [Decision Adopting Modifications to Broadband Public Housing Account, Broadband Adoption Account, and Rural and Urban Regional Broadband Consortia Account Program Rules; and Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Allocation of California Advanced Services Fund Budget](#)





## Strategy 3.2: Leverage Riverside County's CBO network

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>Because the county's community engagement plan focuses on serving socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, partnerships with CBOs will be crucial for successfully engaging these priority communities, particularly those that are traditionally hard to reach.</p> <p>Riverside County will engage CBOs that serve covered populations for this initiative, including but not limited to various ethnic groups, residents who speak languages other than English, low-income residents, students, and veterans. The county's partnership with CBOs will be especially useful for scheduled in-person events across covered populations in the county. The idea is that CBOs will have closer and more established trusted relationships with the residents that the county intends to reach, and therefore, can achieve greater reach, turnout, and in turn enrollment in services that can assist with ACP enrollment, digital literacy initiatives, and more.</p> <p>Furthermore, as the county expands its broadband adoption initiatives from digital literacy courses and device resources, partnerships with CBOs will also be crucial to assist in administering programs where possible.</p> <p>Lastly, given the ample funding that will soon become available through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program, Digital Equity Capacity Grant, and Digital Equity Competitive Grant, it is important that Riverside County CBOs build up their capacity in order to apply for this funding and administer programs that are funded by such programs. As a result, the county intends to work alongside CBOs to continue to grow this network in the coming months and years to support digital equity initiatives at a county-level as well as the community level.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
<p>Given the holistic need for digital equity resources, Riverside County hopes to partner with CBOs across the entire county. Some targeted areas of need the county will intend to focus on include areas with the lower rates of broadband adoption, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside</li> <li>• Menifee</li> <li>• Temecula</li> <li>• Beaumont</li> <li>• Hemet</li> <li>• Palm Springs</li> <li>• Indio</li> <li>• Blythe</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside County Housing and Workforce Solutions</li> <li>• SBX</li> <li>• AGIF</li> <li>• Additional CBOs as partnerships arise</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
CBO compensation costs (\$372,910)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>• NTIA Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Capacity Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Competitive Grant</li> </ul>	



### Strategy 3.3: Maximize use of device refurbishment programs

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>Riverside County will continue its Digital Equity Program. This county-run program provides refurbished computers to low-income families and non-profit organizations.<sup>23</sup> To help continue and bolster the program, the county will expand its coalition by partnering with CBOs carrying out similar electronic recycling platforms, such as TechFin, PCs for People, Close the Gap, and Computers for Classrooms. The county can start advertising the Digital Equity Program online and in community anchor institutions to increase awareness of the Digital Equity Program. An awareness campaign can engage both future donors and potential recipients.</p> <p>Additionally, the Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) Family Resource Center offers free, refurbished computers to low-income RUSD parents who complete 8 hours of computer instruction. To better understand the long-term impact of this program, the county will work with RUSD to design quantifiable KPI metrics to ensure that the number of devices offered meet the magnitude of need across the county. Once this program is modified with KPI, the county plans to work with other school districts to develop similar device refurbishment programs.<sup>24</sup></p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
<p>Efforts will focus on communities with low rates of device ownership, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside</li> <li>• Jurupa Valley</li> <li>• Menifee</li> <li>• Temecula</li> <li>• Hemet</li> <li>• Palm Springs</li> <li>• Indio</li> <li>• Blythe</li> <li>• Coachella</li> <li>• Tribal lands</li> <li>• All county school resource centers</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-profits</li> <li>• Potential device donors (residents, businesses, etc.)</li> <li>• Riverside County residents</li> <li>• Community anchor institutions</li> <li>• Riverside County Housing and Workforce Solutions</li> <li>• Community Action Partnership of Riverside County</li> <li>• Riverside County Department of Public Social Services</li> <li>• Riverside County Economic Development Agency</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The county intends to provide approximately \$500,000 worth of value in donated devices.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spectrum Digital Education Grant</li> <li>• CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>• Emergency Connectivity Fund</li> <li>• NTIA Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Capacity Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Competitive Grant</li> </ul>	

23 RivcoConnect, [Digital Equity Program](#)

24 Riverside Unified School District, [RivcoConnect Digital Equity Program](#)



### Strategy 3.4: Improve device access for students and all covered populations in Riverside County

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>Riverside County will perform a gap analysis with the Office of Education, school districts, and higher education institutions. The goal of this analysis will be to quantify how many students lose access to a digital devices when school is not in session. Riverside County will then work with school districts to develop school-administered device loaner programs for the summertime, prioritizing schools in areas with lower broadband adoption rates, lower household incomes, and higher concentrations of minority students.</p> <p>Equitable access to devices and academic content over the summer can help reduce learning loss and remediate achievement gaps exacerbated by the pandemic. The county plans to take advantage of strategies used by school districts across the country, including the remote disabling of devices, optional protection plans, short “blackout” periods to perform maintenance and inventory, and device swaps for returning broken devices.<sup>25</sup> As detailed in Strategy 3, the county will also amend its existing device refurbishment program with the Family Resource Center at Riverside Unified School District. The county will then work with other school districts to develop similar programs for low-income families. To supplement the ACP Outreach Campaign, the county will also look to identify grants that will cover the costs of device giveaways to residents enrolling in the program.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
<p>Efforts will focus on communities with low rates of device ownership, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside</li> <li>• Jurupa Valley</li> <li>• Menifee</li> <li>• Temecula</li> <li>• Hemet</li> <li>• Palm Springs</li> <li>• Indio</li> <li>• Blythe</li> <li>• Coachella</li> <li>• Tribal lands</li> <li>• All county school resource centers</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside County Office of Education</li> <li>• OneFuture Coachella Valley</li> <li>• Higher Education Institutions</li> <li>• School districts in Riverside County</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The county intends to provide approximately \$500,000 worth of value in donated devices.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>• BEAD Funding</li> <li>• Full-Service Community Schools</li> <li>• GEAR UP</li> <li>• Indian Education Title VI Formula Grants</li> <li>• Migrant Education Program</li> <li>• Rural and Low-Income School Program</li> <li>• Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program, Title IV, Part A</li> <li>• Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)</li> </ul>	





## Supporting Strategies

To support the success of its infrastructure, affordability, and adoption goals, the county will engage in several complementary strategic activities. These activities include establishing centralized oversight across all broadband initiatives through standup of the county's Broadband Team. The Broadband Team will lead and oversee project execution; coordinate with parties on initiatives wherein the Team is not the primary implementing entity; continuously track and report on the Plan's progress; and manage relationships with partnering stakeholders. Additionally, the Broadband Team will continue its ongoing grant pursuit and management activities and will consider the county's economic and workforce development strategy in the implementation of all three primary goals.



**Stand up a Broadband Team to lead and oversee broadband project execution**



**Maintain partnerships with relevant stakeholders and centralize points-of-contact**



**Establish KPIs to measure and evaluate performance measurement**



**Conduct ongoing grant identification, pursuit, and management**



**Examine the role of broadband in the county's larger economic and workforce development strategy**





## • Stand up a Broadband Team to lead and oversee broadband project execution

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>Riverside County’s broadband initiatives are currently led by the county’s Director of Broadband Services and supported by a team that includes county employees and contractors who have assisted the county in its broadband planning and strategy work. As the county begins to execute planned broadband projects, it plans to formalize certain aspects of the Broadband Team’s operations to ensure the Team has clear roles, project management framework, and performance and progress measurement.</p> <p>With a dedicated team to oversee the county’s broadband initiatives, the county will also be able to assign points of contact to manage partnerships with CBOs, ISPs, and other stakeholders involved in its broadband projects. For example, as Riverside County and its ISP partners begin to build last-mile infrastructure funded by its Last Mile Federal Funding Account allocation, it will be critical for the county to manage project execution to ensure appropriate use of resources and alignment with the county’s greatest areas of need. Additionally, as the county strengthens its CBO network and partners with CBOs on digital literacy and other initiatives, it will need a dedicated point of contact to manage relationships and coordinate activities.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
N/A: applicable to projects concerning all areas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riverside County Information Technology</li> <li>Riverside County Board of Supervisors</li> <li>Partnering county agencies</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded county FTE or contractors</li> </ul>		<p>The Broadband Team’s activities would be supported through existing county FTEs and the county’s ARPA funding already allocated for consultants through June 2025. The county may choose to seek additional funding to support these activities, including for activities to be conducted after 2025, through the following opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NTIA Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant</li> <li>CPUC Local Agency Technical Assistance</li> </ul>	



## • Maintain partnerships with relevant stakeholders and centralize points of contact

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>As the county executes its broadband strategy, it will continue to leverage the strong relationships it has with its current partners, which include CBOs, ISPs, local government agencies, and more. Additionally, the county plans to expand its stakeholder network across the county and even statewide. To build this network and manage these relationships, the county plans to engage in several activities.</p> <p>First, the county plans to designate an internal point of contact for all community and stakeholder engagement activities within the office. This will be critical for managing stakeholder relationships and coordinating engagement activities. This point of contact will also be responsible for expanding the county's partnership network.</p> <p>As such, the point of contact will lead efforts to conduct stakeholder mapping in order to identify relevant organizational stakeholders within the county's broadband ecosystem. This work will involve establishing relationships with additional individuals in existing partner organizations, researching opportunities for additional partnerships, and conducting outreach to those organizations and individuals. By mapping its broadband stakeholder network, the county will be able to streamline future stakeholder engagement efforts, including for joint grant pursuit, partnership with ISPs on infrastructure construction, and community digital equity initiatives. Following the stakeholder mapping activity, the county plans to establish a communication and engagement plan to involve each of its partners as relevant in its broadband initiatives.</p> <p>Finally, the county plans to find opportunities to share data with stakeholders, when possible, in order to facilitate partnerships. This information sharing, which will flow both ways between the county and its stakeholders, is critical to maximizing the potential of these partnerships. This is particularly pertinent as the county engages ISPs in infrastructure and service expansion, as these efforts require coordination related to large amounts of geospatial, broadband subscription, and socioeconomic data.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
N/A: applicable to projects concerning all areas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside County Information Technology</li> <li>• Partnering county agencies</li> <li>• CBOs</li> <li>• ISPs</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded county FTE or contractors</li> <li>• Travel to stakeholder engagement events</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>• Spectrum Digital Education Grant</li> <li>• Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Capacity Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Competitive Grant</li> </ul>	



## Establish KPIs to measure and evaluate performance measurement

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>As the county continues to pursue initiatives to expand broadband availability, affordability, and adoption, it will be critical to measure its progress against key performance indicators. While many of these indicators are at least partially outside the control of the Broadband Team, they will be used to measure the county's overall progress towards closing the digital divide. Examples of potential indicators for evaluating progress across the three goals in this report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of households in Riverside County unserved by broadband</li> <li>• Number of dollars needed to reduce the number of households unserved</li> <li>• Target number of households enrolled in ACP</li> <li>• Reduction in the number of households without a digital device</li> <li>• Increase in broadband subscription rates across the county</li> </ul> <p>The Broadband Team plans to continuously monitor performance and progress along these metrics and leverage this data to find opportunities for process improvement. To this end, the county plans to establish a performance monitoring plan, which will set processes for collecting performance data, regular touchpoints for assessing data, and procedures for using this data to adjust and improve operations. This will allow the county to measure progress against the goals established in this Plan and be able to report out on progress to the public. This plan will also include opportunities to solicit feedback from stakeholders.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
N/A: applicable to projects concerning all areas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside County Information Technology</li> <li>• Broadband stakeholders</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded county FTE or contractors</li> <li>• Travel to stakeholder engagement events</li> </ul>		These activities will be supported by existing funding for county FTEs and contractors who will conduct this work.	



## Grant identification, pursuit, and management

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
<p>Through programs established as part of recent federal and state legislation, Riverside County has access to unprecedented grant funding for broadband work. As such, the county will continue ongoing monitoring of grant opportunities and strategic pursuit of funding to support its broadband initiatives. This includes active monitoring of upcoming funding opportunities, strategic prioritization of opportunities to align with the county's criteria, and pursuit of priority grants.</p> <p>Riverside County will also continue to seek out partnerships with relevant ISPs, CBOs, county agencies, and other organizations as is relevant for certain grants. In its role as a coordinating resource in the region, the county also plans to share grant opportunities that do not meet its criteria but that might be of interest to other organizations.</p> <p>As the county receives more grant funding, it will consider technological or systems solutions to help streamline its grant management activities. These activities would include day-to-day management of grant funds, expenditure and other data collection from subcontractors and partners, and reporting to the administering entities for these grants as necessary.</p>			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
N/A: applicable to projects concerning all areas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riverside County Information Technology</li> <li>Co-applicants including ISPs, CBOs, county agencies, and other stakeholders that may be involved in grant applications</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded county FTE or contractors</li> </ul>		<p>The county is monitoring dozens of federal, state, and private grants to support its broadband initiatives. However, it has prioritized several grants for pursuit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>CASF Broadband Infrastructure Account</li> <li>CPUC Last Mile Federal Funding Account</li> <li>NTIA Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Grant</li> <li>USDA Community Connect</li> </ul>	





• **Examine the role of broadband in the county’s larger economic and workforce development strategy**

DESCRIPTION		PRIORITY:	MEDIUM
Connecting residents with broadband subscriptions, devices, and digital skills will have important implications on the county’s working residents. By closing the digital divide for its workforce, the county will enable residents to seek new skills, education, remote work, and other opportunities. Consequently, the county’s broadband initiatives directly impact its broader economic and workforce development goals, and therefore must be executed in coordination with those efforts. To achieve this, the Broadband Team will collaborate with stakeholders leading this work in the county, including relevant county departments. Additionally, the Team will consider the workforce impacts of other strategies, such as those to deploy digital literacy training and provide devices to residents. Designing programs to prepare residents with the abilities and skills to improve their professional prospects will be critical as the county implements these strategies.			
TARGET AREAS OF NEED		RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS	
N/A: applicable to projects concerning all areas		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riverside County Office of Economic Development</li> <li>• Riverside County Housing and Workforce Solutions</li> <li>• Riverside County educational institutions (e.g., UC Riverside, CSU institutions, local community colleges, vocational schools)</li> </ul>	
ESTIMATED COSTS		FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	
N/A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Agency Technical Assistance</li> <li>• CASF Broadband Adoption Account</li> <li>• Digital Equity Capacity Grant</li> <li>• Digital Equity Competitive Grant</li> </ul>	

# COUNTY PARTNERSHIP MODEL

In order to execute many of these strategies, the county must partner with relevant community and regional organizations. The county's partnerships include a range of different potential partners from private broadband providers to other county agencies and CBOs. The county anticipates that each partnership will differ based on the kind of projects and initiatives they will be engaged in:



## BROADBAND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Partnerships between the county and broadband service providers will be primarily for the deployment of broadband infrastructure. Given that the county does not anticipate building out, operating, and maintaining broadband infrastructure, build-out to un(der)served areas will be done in partnership with service providers. Efforts to establish such partnerships will include frequent discussions with ISPs to gauge mutual interests in un(der)served communities. In addition, efforts will include identification of grant opportunities to pursue funding for agreed upon areas in partnership either as a co-applicant or in support of a broadband provider looking to deploy high-speed broadband infrastructure in Riverside County.

## PARTNER COUNTY AGENCIES

Partner county agencies will be instrumental partners to the Broadband Team. Partnerships with other departments and offices, particularly those that provide public-facing social services, will allow the county to better reach and engage ACP-qualifying populations to increase enrollment in the program. Community anchor institutions such as libraries, community centers, and parks will be key meeting grounds as the county rolls out digital literacy programs and expands the presence of public Wi-Fi. Furthermore, as the county works with broadband providers to deploy broadband infrastructure, the Broadband Team plans to engage other county agencies, particularly groups such as the Parks, to ensure broadband deployment is meeting the needs of all stakeholders.



## COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

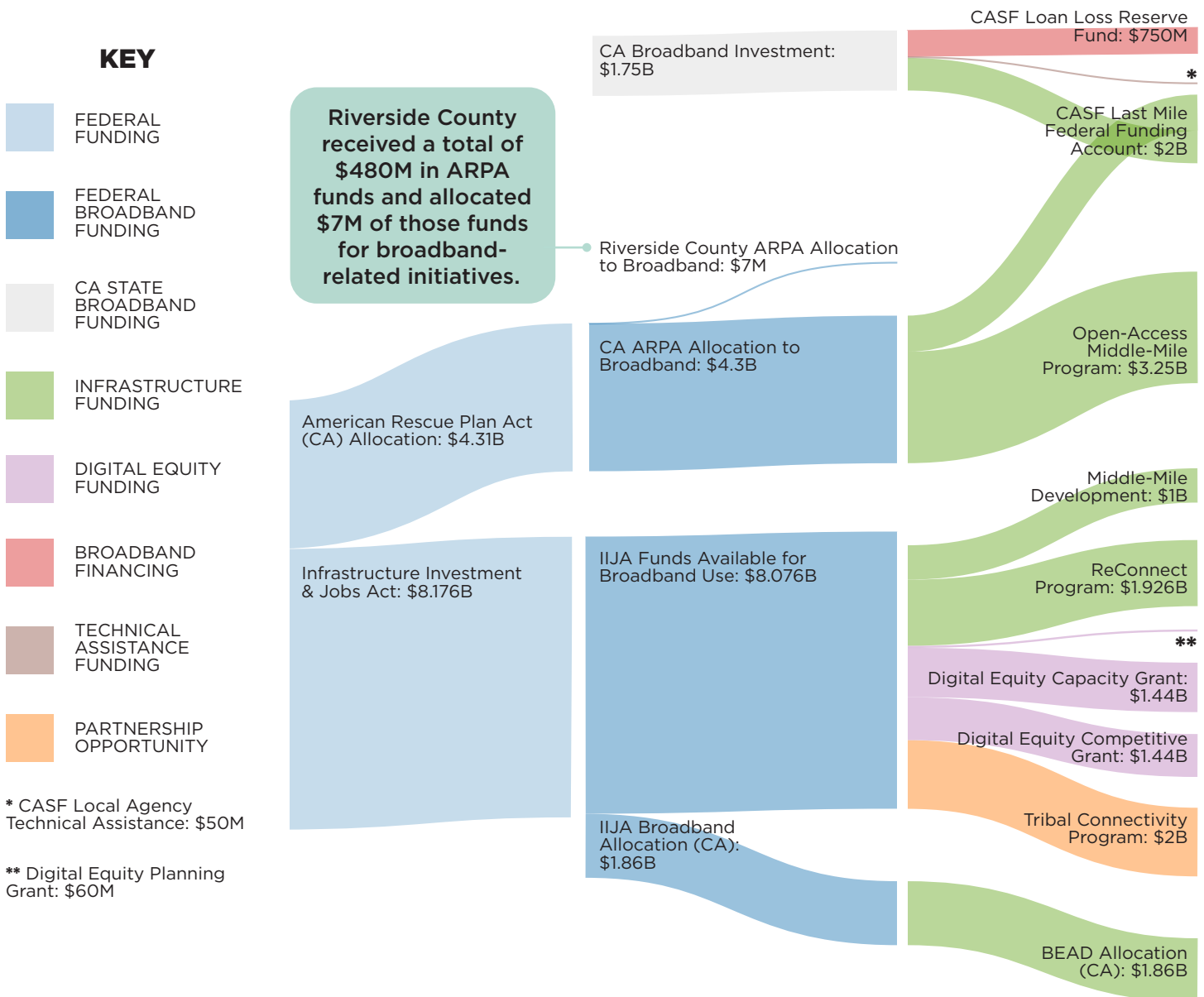
CBOs will serve as trusted partners for the county, particularly as it relates to outreach to underserved, low-income communities that can benefit from enrollment in ACP, digital inclusion programs, and broadband workforce opportunities. To assist with capacity building, the county envisions CBOs to assist with staffing county-organized ACP-enrollment events and administering digital literacy programming within community anchor institutions and other community sites.



# FUNDING LANDSCAPE

Riverside County has access to an unprecedented level of grant funding to support its broadband initiatives. The county has already reserved \$7 million of its approximately \$480 million ARPA allocation for broadband-related initiatives for broadband strategic planning and ACP outreach. Additionally, in December 2022, CPUC awarded the county \$500,000 through the Local Agency Technical Assistance grant. In summer 2023, the county plans to support partners applying to several additional grants, including the CASF Broadband Adoption Grant and the Last Mile Federal Funding Account Grant, which are both administered by the CPUC. Later in 2023 and into 2024, the county anticipates significant additional funding will become available from both state and federal agencies. The diagram below illustrates some of the major broadband funding opportunities currently available and coming available in the future.

Figure 3: **Funding Landscape Diagram**



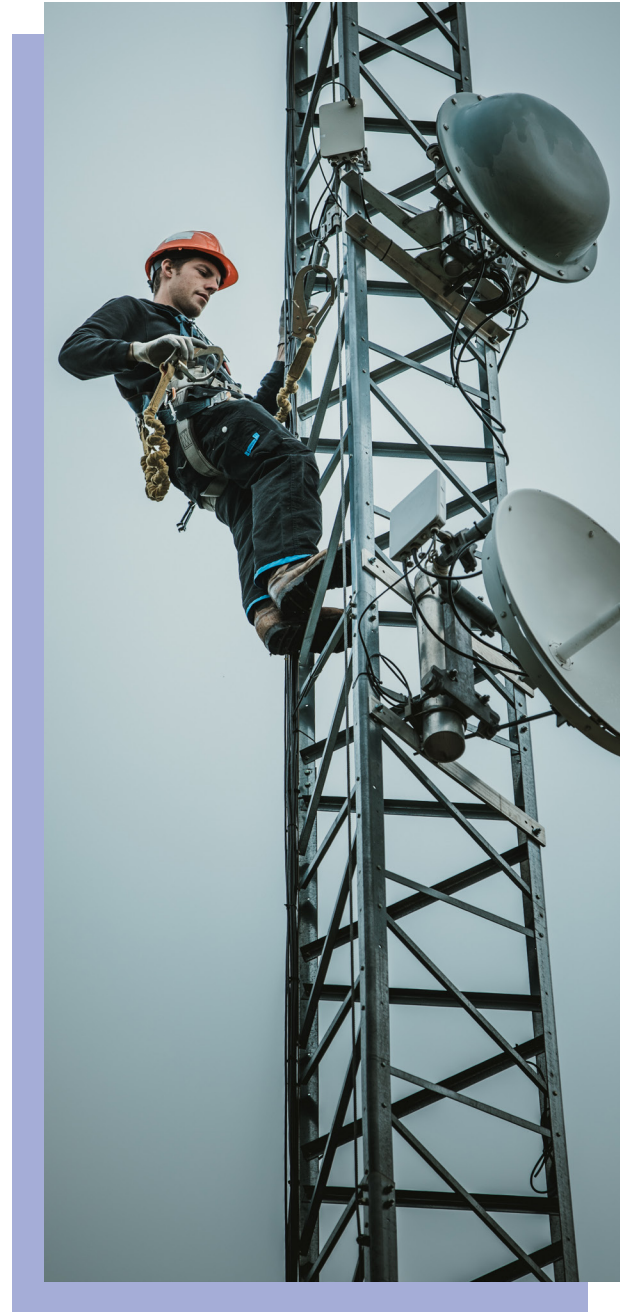
The county is monitoring and pursuing grants and is prioritizing them based on their ability to help close the digital divide through the pillars of broadband availability, affordability, and adoption.

## STATE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- The **Last Mile Federal Funding Account** grant, which includes a combination of ARPA and California state general funds, provides funding for the construction of last-mile infrastructure to connect unserved and underserved communities to local networks. The county plans to partner with local ISPs to pursue this grant and complete subsequent funded projects.
- The **CASF Broadband Infrastructure Account Grant** provides funding for the deployment of communication services and promoting construction of broadband infrastructure, particularly in unserved and underserved communities in the state.
- The **CASF Broadband Adoption Account Grant** provides grants to facilitate broadband adoption and digital inclusion, including through broadband access, digital literacy training programs, and educational content for consumers with low broadband adoption.

## FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- The **Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment** program is the IJJA's signature broadband program. It provides billions of dollars in funding to support planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs aimed at expanding high-speed internet access across the country. The federal government announced the State of California's BEAD allocation, \$1.86 billion, which may become available to local governments such as Riverside County through a sub-grantee process.
- The **Digital Equity Act** programs, also established through IJJA, will provide another opportunity for Riverside County to receive funding as a subgrantee of the state. The Digital Equity Act established funding for several grants: the Digital Equity Planning Grant, the Digital Equity Capacity Grant, and the Digital Equity Competitive Grant.



As mentioned previously, the unprecedented amounts of broadband grants will be key drivers for the county's infrastructure and digital inclusion initiatives. In the coming months, the county will establish a more comprehensive budget model to identify a close estimation of its funding needs. This will be a key resource in informing grant applications and all funding requests. Additional information on the broadband funding landscape and the county's approach to grant pursuit can be found in the Riverside County Broadband Funding Report.





# IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The strategies outlined in this Plan will require significant investment and time to accomplish, particularly when deploying broadband infrastructure. The county will roll-out implementation in three phases. While some activities like program oversight, stakeholder engagement, grant pursuit, and infrastructure deployment will be ongoing, other strategies will be staggered to best align with the resources and capacity of the Broadband Team. Timelines will also be informed by changing the availability of key broadband grant programs that can fund the county's broadband initiatives.

The proposed implementation timeline is illustrated below.

Figure 4: **Implementation Timeline**

	Phase		Phase 1				Phase 2				Phase 3			
	Year		2023				2024				2025			
	Quarter		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
GOAL 1: Expand broadband infrastructure to un(der)served areas across Riverside County														
Support build-out of last-mile broadband infrastructure in un(der)served communities														
Expand availability of public Wi-Fi														
Coordinate cross-jurisdictional broadband planning efforts														
Engage stakeholders to determine workforce needs for broadband infrastructure														
GOAL 2: Make broadband access more affordable														
Increase ACP enrollment through ACP outreach campaign									May continue if ACP program funding is extended					
Stand up an ACP call center to assist residents with enrollment									May continue if ACP program funding is extended					
GOAL 3: Encourage broadband adoption														
Implement digital literacy programs in community anchor institutions														
Leverage Riverside County’s CBO network														
Maximize use of device refurbishment programs														
Improve device access for students and all covered populations in Riverside County														
Supporting Strategies: Complementary activities to support the success of Goals 1-3														
Stand up a Broadband Team to lead and oversee broadband project execution														
Maintain and expand partnership with stakeholders (ISPs, CBOs, county departments, regional bodies)														
Establish KPIs to measure and evaluate performance measurement														
Grant identification, pursuit, and management														
Examine the role of broadband in the county’s larger economic and workforce development strategy														



# NEXT STEPS

Since September 2022, the county has been working steadily to build out the foundations of its Broadband Master Plan. The county embarked on a journey to conduct a data-informed approach into the current state of broadband, a journey that ultimately resulted in the Gaps and Opportunities Report. As part of this journey, the county recognized the importance of partnership in closing the digital divide. As such, the county convened many of its partners and stakeholders to obtain their input and ensure its broadband strategies were successful in reaching the Riverside County community. Furthermore, the county conducted a deep dive into the local, state, and federal broadband funding landscape to ensure all funding opportunities that can benefit residents were pursued.

Following this in-depth current state assessment, the county will begin to implement the strategies outlined in this Plan. The county's actions will make use of the insights detailed in the Broadband Stakeholder Engagement and Broadband Funding Reports to ensure that all strategies are thoroughly planned, funded, and executed. The county plans to regularly communicate its progress on strategic plan implementation to the public.

